

Fundraising from local businesses

This information sheet aims to help you get started with applying to local businesses for small amounts of money or items that are useful to your group, such as raffle prizes or equipment you need for an activity. It includes advice and tips about asking local businesses for donations, and some sample letters.

For more help with fundraising, see our other information sheets.

General tips and ideas

Use your local connections

Businesses are more likely to give to people they know. Some companies like to encourage their staff to get involved in community activity, so may be more likely to donate to a project that is recommended by someone who works for them. Don't be shy about using any connections you have.

If you are approaching local shops it is worth going in person, especially if they know you. Take a letter saying what you want, printed on your organisation's headed notepaper so you can give this to them to back up your request.

Try your local businesses

Most businesses prefer to support groups in their immediate area. Small businesses, such as greengrocers or local convenience stores, may want to support their local community. They are less likely to be interested in donating to a group that isn't very close by. Even some chain stores and supermarkets prefer to donate to groups based very near one of their branches.

Look for businesses that are relevant

Some shops are keen to support projects that involve an activity or event that particularly requires the kinds of things they sell. For example, a gardening shop might like to donate to a gardening group, or a cookware shop might donate to a group that runs cookery classes. Use the internet or the yellow pages to find relevant local businesses. You could ask them for donations of items rather than money – for example, if you need spades, ask your local garden shop to donate the spades, rather than the cash to buy them.

Offer something in return

One reason local businesses may donate to your group is if they think this will lead to them getting more business. Offering them publicity in return for their donation will encourage them to support you. If you are making printed publicity, or have a website, Facebook page or Twitter account, offer to include their logo or a sentence saying that they have supported you. If you are running an event, offer to announce their support at the event so that everyone knows that they donated.

Ask in person

A small business is more likely to donate to your group if they have actually spoken to you in person. While sending a letter is a useful way of giving information about your group, it is important to also visit the business, or phone them up, to explain who you are and why you would like them to donate. This makes it more personal and gives you a better chance of persuading the business that your group is important and needs their support.

Put your request in writing

When you go into a shop or phone up a business, you may find that the person who makes decisions about donations is not available to speak to. They may also be too busy to consider your request right then and there. It is a good idea to have a letter that you can give or send to them, to follow up your request. This should:

- ♦ Be on headed paper
- ♦ Be no longer than one side of A4 if possible
- ♦ Be addressed specifically to the person you are writing to – try to find out their name before sending the letter.
- ♦ Include details of what you want the money for, how much you need and who it will benefit

There are two sample letters on page 3. If you don't hear back after sending your letter, follow it up with another phone call or visit. People running businesses can be very busy, and may need reminding about the donation you have asked for.

Use any established donation programmes

Some big companies have established donation programmes in which the company gives grants to community groups and charities. In order to apply for these you usually have to fill in an application form. Companies that have this type of grant programme are probably less likely to make an on-the-spot donation to your group – instead they will suggest that you apply for one of their grants. For ideas on who to apply to, have a look at our Favourite Funder pages.¹ You can use our information on *Writing a Funding Application* to help you write this kind of application.

¹ <http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information-category/raising-money/favourite-funders-for-community-groups/>

Tell businesses how their donation was spent

If you have received a donation once, the same business may be interested in donating again in future. They are more likely to do this if you write to them, thanking them for their support and letting them know how your event or project went. Send a short report, saying what you did and how many people took part. Include photos and any press cuttings if you have them. Keep a record of the businesses that have donated to you, and the contact name you have, so that you can write to them again in future.

Sample Letter 1

Name

Address

Date

Dear Sir or Madam

East Brighton Family Fun Day

I am writing as a member of East Brighton Primary School PTA to ask for your support for the East Brighton Family Fun Day, a great local event which has been running for many years. It is organised in partnership by several local organisations, including the three local tenants' associations and the four primary schools. These are: (list organisations).

Fun Day 2015 will have activities for every age and every taste, and enough going on for a whole day's outing. The bouncy castle, pony rides, face painting, clowns and fairground rides always delight the kids, while the line dancing and bands are enjoyed by everyone. In the arena you can watch gymnastic displays and see birds of prey go through their paces, or you could try your luck at one of the stalls and hunt down a bargain at the car boot sale.

The event involves the whole community. Local groups can raise money, and the school dance groups and choirs put on performances in the arena.

The Fun Day would not happen without the energy and enthusiasm of the local people who organise it. Unfortunately, enthusiasm in itself is not enough, and the Fun Day costs a considerable amount to put on. Around £6,500 has to be raised to cover expenses, which include publicity, insurance, entertainers and bands.

The Fun Day could not continue without the support of the local Council and those businesses and individuals who have contributed generously over the years. I am writing to ask if you would be able to make a donation towards the 2015 Fun Day. Your contribution will be very much appreciated, and acknowledged in our publicity and the Fun Day programme.

If you would like to talk more about the Family Fun Day and how you could help, please feel free to give me a ring on xxx.

Yours sincerely

Name

Sample Letter 2

Address to reply to

Date

Dear

Christmas Party

I am writing to you as Chair of Merry Fields Residents' Association to ask if you would be able to make a donation towards our Christmas Party.

We are expecting around 80 people to attend this event, which was hugely popular when we ran it for the first time last year. We provide a 3-course Christmas dinner, entertainment and a free raffle. We are involving our local primary school, and hope to have the school choir singing Christmas carols. A local group will do an acrobatic display and there will be a pianist to serenade the guests.

Many of the people who come to the party are senior citizens who live on their own and have to survive on very low incomes. Our Christmas Party gives them the chance to join in the festive season, and is an important community event.

A lot of time and effort is put into the Christmas party by members of the Residents Association, who do all the preparation, organisation and cooking. We work hard to make it a successful community event, but we can only achieve this if we are given crucial support by local businesses like yourself. The total organisation of the party costs us £XXX. Any contribution you can make towards these costs, however small, is much appreciated. We are also looking for gifts for the raffle, decorations for the hall, contributions of food, and all sorts of other things.

Everyone who has supported the party will be credited on the day, and in any publicity.

If you think you can help, either with a cash donation or a gift, please contact me at xxxxxxxx, or send a cheque, made payable to xxxxxxxxxx to the above address.

Thank you for your support,

Yours sincerely

Name